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ABSTRACT

In this memoir, a principal recounts the story of his 2 years at Edison Elementary School in San Francisco (CA), a school that was called the worst school in California. The students had the worst standardized test scores in the district, and racial discord and playground violence were common. The school was facing the threat of reconstitution, the reassignment of all personnel. Only 6 of the school's 427 children lived in the surrounding neighborhood, and the rest were bused in from 3 other neighborhoods. Students were 45% Hispanic and 43% African American, and more than one third were identified as limited English speaking. The new principal made valiant efforts to improve the situation, beginning by attempting to minimize the divisive effects of the school's track system. Techniques to motivate students, involve parents, and promote various kinds of interaction were instituted. Concerted efforts over the 2 years resulted in the first improvements in test scores in more than a decade and in an improved school environment. Although change was evident, the school board recommended reconstitution. All school personnel were reassigned, and those who wanted to continue at Edison had to reapply. An epilogue describes the improved climate the new staff inherited. The following chapters are included: (1) "Year One: Terrible and Wonderful"; (2) "Edison and Its Stakeholders"; (3) "How Edison Fell Short of an Effective Learning Development"; (4) "Turning Edison Around"; (5) "Achievements of the Year"; and (6) "The Second Year: As Things Change, Much Stays the Same." (SLD)

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